DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 317 225 JC 900 149

AUTHOR Stuhr, Christian
TITLE Barriers to Decentralized Teacher Education.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Decentralized Teacher Education Conference (Fort St. John, British Columbia, Canada, February 28-March 2, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Access to Education; *College Planning; Community Colleges; Decentralization; Higher Education; *Off Campus Facilities; Organizational Change; Quotas; *Rural Extension; *Teacher Education Programs; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Canada

ABSTRACT

In an effort to meet the demand for off-campus postsecondary education at the degree, diploma, or certificate levels, this report examines the barriers against and reasons for offering decentralized teacher education programs from universities to colleges in rural Canadian provinces. Several reasons exist for the demand for off-campus postsecondary programs at the degree, diploma, and certificate level: (1) married women and others who find it difficult to move welcome programs which are brought to them; (2) small-town politicans and economic development officers may see the establishment of permanent university programs as a source of prosperity for their communities; (3) and parents are keenly aware of the savings that are realized when their university-age children live at home. With reference to teacher education specifically, the additional argument is made that a national teacher shortage is looming on the horizon, and that the creation of an off-campus teacher education program is an innovative, responsible, and cost-effective way to address this impending emergency. In spite of these reasons, three primary barriers exist to rural postsecondary education. The first barrier is the impact of enrollment quotas. Increasingly scarce resources have forced the two universities of Saskatchewan to impose cost-cutting measures; since neither institution would reduce academic standards, enrollment was limited through the imposition of quotas on certain programs. The second barrier is conflicting visions of off-campus postsecondary education. Two groups in Saskatchewan support the decentralization of postsecondary credit programs to rural Saskatchewan; however, one group favors the establishment of another college system, and the other supports the rise of the current system of regional colleges. The third barrier, ignorance of teaching outcomes, reflects the concern that decentralized programs are somehow inferior to on-campus programs. (JMC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED317225

BARRIERS TO DECENTRALIZED TEACHER EDUCATION

Christian Stuhr

A CHRC Research Service Publication

JC 900 149

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C. Stuhr

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Presented at the Decentralized Teacher Education Conference
Fort St. John, B.C. - 28 February to 2 March 1990

Copyright © 1990, Cypress Hills Regional College

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Introductory. The decentralization of British Columbia's teacher education programs from universities to colleges is but one aspect of a broader issue. The issue is broader in two distinct senses. First, it extends beyond this province; in rural Saskatchewan and elsewhere in Canada, there exists an equally-strong interest in programs that would permit students to qualify for teaching certificates without having to leave home for extended periods. (In this one respect, at least, B.C. is not unique.) Secondly, the issue goes beyond teacher education; my experience with rural Saskatchewan colleges suggests that there also exists a strong demand for many other off-campus post-secondary programs, not only at the degree level, but also at the level of diploma- and certificate-programs.

There are several reasons for this demand, and they are not difficult to understand.

Married women and others who find it difficult to move to a larger centre with a university campus welcome programs that are brought to them.

Small-town politicians and economic development officers may see the establishment of permanent university programs (and perhaps of a permanent campus) as a source of prosperity for their communities.

Parents are keenly appreciative of the savings that are realized when their university-age children live at home.

Young high-school graduates are often not ready to move out on their own, and so are happy to complete their transition from adolescence to adulthood in the familiar security of their parental home. (I have never actually heard a young person admit to this, but others have solemnly assured me that many youngsters feel this way.)

The foregoing applies to rural and northern post-secondary education generally. With reference to teacher education specifically, the additional argument is made that a national teacher shortage is looming on the horizon, and that the creation of an off-campus teacher education program is an innovative, responsible and cost-effective way to address this impending emergency. (This point is suggested in the brochure announcing this very conference.)

Taking post-secondary programs off-campus necessarily costs money, and there are several ways of raising it. Fees may be increased; the universities may re-allocate their resources internally, channeling a greater proportion to off-campus programs; special grants may be provided by the provincial

government. None of these is likely to generate universal enthusiasm, but our own rhetoric prevents us from rejecting off-campus programs on grounds of cost alone. The principle of equal opportunity for all, and especially the principle of equal access to education, has been proclaimed by almost every political party. It is becoming morally unacceptable to deny small-town residents the programs that are taken for granted by people living in the larger cities.

With all this working in favor of rural post-secondary education in general and decentralized teacher education in particular, one would expect many programs of this kind to flourish. I do not know the situation in B.C., but I regret to report to you that in my own province of Saskatchewan, such is not the case. It is fair to ask why not; in what follows, I shall describe three types of barriers to rural post-secondary education of which I have personal knowledge. While the specific circumstances may be unique, there are some underlying generalities which may be recognized as familiar by rural post-secondary educators across Canada.

Money and accessibility: the impact of quotas. In Saskatchewan, there are two universities: the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and the University of Regina in our

provincial capital. Both have teacher training programs.

In recent years, provincial funding to our post-secondary institutions has been tight. At least in part, this has been a result of poor harvests and an ailing economy.

Increasingly scarce resources have forced our two universities to make difficult choices. Since neither is committed to lowering academic standards as a cost-cutting measure, other means had to be found. The most obvious of these is to limit enrolments, and the most obvious way to limit enrolments is to impose enrolment quotas on certain programs.

At the University of Saskatchewan, the quota system works in a straightforward fashion. No longer is high school graduation sufficient to assure admission to the College of Education; a certain minimum average is now required, one which in a very public way seems to creep upward annually. Needless to say, such publicity makes the University the target of much criticism. Enrolment restrictions violate an established Saskatchewan tradition, or so it is argued; no qualified high school graduates should be denied admission to the university program of their choice.

The Faculty of Education at the University of Regina also has a quota system, but one that is not so visible. Professing an open admission policy, the Faculty does in fact admit all qualified students to the first year. The catch is a required course called "Introduction to Education: Its Principles and Practices". Its number is EPS 100, and the current university calendar describes it in these terms:

> "Principles of education and teaching. Cognitive, affective and methodological dimensions of instruction. Four hour laboratory per week includes in-school practicum. Prerequisite: Selection Criteria Applies [sic]."

Cypress Hills Regional College is no novice at brokering. It has special expertise in brokering education courses, having been the first in Saskatchevan to deliver a Master of Education program for the University of Oregon. It currently offers both undergraduate and postgraduate courses for Regina's Faculty of Education. Unfortunately, the experience of the College in brokering EPS 100 - the single required first-year course at Regina - has been less than happy.

In summary, this is what has happened to date:

1. 2 May to 15 June 1988: EPS 100 (Introduction to Education) is successfully offered in Swift Current. Enrolments: ten women, one man.

2. 17 August 1988: Lorne Hepworth, Minister of Education, is reported to have urged about 500 applicants rejected by Saskatchewan universities to consider Regional Colleges for their first-year of university classes.

3. October, 1988: CHRC receives verbal notification that EPS 100 would not be approved for delivery by the College during the winter semester.

4. 24 October 1988: CHRC Principal writes to the U. of R. Extension Division asking for the reasons for the decision to withhold EPS 100.

5. 3 November 1988: The Associate Dean of Education, on behalf of the Dean, states that EPS 100, when previously offered in Swift Current, was an experiment which "...could be viewed as a success", but "...taking into account that we already offer more than sufficient sections on campus, and because it is a close integral part of our sequential professional development, the Subject Area recommended that this class not be included for any off-campus location. Therefore, we are denying this class not only for Swift Current but for all off-campus requests."

6. 10 November 1988: CHRC Principal writes to Lawrie McFarlane, Deputy Minister of Education, describing the events to date as "a particularly serious obstacle...to making the undergraduate programs in education at the University of Regina accessible to rural Saskatchewan." No specific action is requested except for this general statement: "I look forward to any assistance you can lend us."

7. 28 November 1988: The Associate Dean of Education writes to CHRC Principal, confirming the earlier decision to limit EPS 100 to on-campus sections, and attaches a memo (15 November 1988) from the Chairman of Educational Professional Studies, in support. That memo cites two reasons for the decision: program integrity (the class is an integral part of many programs), and current limits on class sections.

Writes the EPS Chairman: "...our current limit in offering 11 sections of EPS 100 is a reasonable limitation given current financial resources available to education programs. There is an increasing backlog of students who are not able to enroll in EPS 100 on campus... If additional classes are to be offered, the area believes this backlog must be considered in balance with requests for off-campus offerings of this course."

He continues: "For example, one student from the spring session class (held in Swift Current) was successful in being admitted this fall to the Elementary Program. She was previously unsuccessful in her attempt to register for the spring session classes on campus. She commuted to Swift Current so she could be part of the class made available there."

One might think that such resourcefulness is commendable. However, the judgment of the Chairman of EPS is otherwise: "The area is of the opinion that this pattern is not appropriate", he writes, and concludes on a note of rising indignation: "It could become a means to circumvent the normal procedures in place on campus."

8. 2 December 1988: Caught between a Minister of Education who urges first-year university students to take their classes through Regional Colleges and a university faculty who consider this way of getting an education to be an inappropriate way of circumventing the normal procedures on campus, the CHRC Principal wires the President of the University of Regina, with a copy to the Deputy Minister:

"The problem of having more students than seats in the on-campus sections is not solved by eliminating all off-campus sections. We urge you to review the matter in order to

assure that off-campus programming is given an equitable share of the admittedly limited resources of the university. We urge you to deal with this immediately to preserve the credibility of your programming."

9. 15 December 1988: Writing on behalf of Regina's President, the Vice-President (Academic) replies:

"Our existing resource constraints, coupled with our concern for the quality of all of our programme offerings, are such that we are unable to respond positively to your request. This is our official response. Best regards."

10. January 1989: Responding to a telephone request, the University informs CHRC that in September of 1988, a total of 534 first-year students were admitted to the Faculty of Education (359 full-time, 175 part-time).

11. 26-27 January 1989: Dean of Education and CHRC Principal meet face-to-face at a "Women in Education Conference" to discuss the issue of EPS 100. No agreement is reached.

12. 30 January 1989: CHRC Principal writes to Dean of Education, suggesting a further meeting to arrange for the early resumption of the delivery of EPS 100 through Regional Colleges, but pointing out that "influential members of your Faculty question the motivation of the women who took the class in Swift Current."

13. 31 January 1989: The Dean replies, accusing the CHRC Principal of substituting innuendo for fact.

14. 3 February 1989: CHRC Principal writes to Dean, quoting the Chairman of the EPS area, who wrote that "the data on students from the spring session class [of EPS 100] also raises the question of motivation for enrolling in the off-campus class", and suggesting yet again a meeting to discuss the early off-campus delivery of EPS 100.

15. 6 February 1989: "I will be pleased to meet you, Christian, but without any a priori commitment. Bob"

16. 10 February 1989: "If we don't discuss the early resumption of the delivery of EPS 100 through Regional Colleges, I have no idea what we could possibly talk about! What do you see as a possible agenda? Chris S."

17. 11 February 1989: Star-Phoenix runs two stories on EPS 100.

18. 13 February 1989: CHRC Principal requests data on the sex-breakdown of education students in general, and EPS 100 students in particular.

19. 14 February 1989: The Dean of Education agrees to meet the CHRC Principal "to share understandings".

20. 15 February 1989: Swift Current Sun runs story on EPS 100.

21. 17 February 1989: CHRC Principal suggests meeting Dean of Education either in Swift Current or in Regina on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, 22-24 February, and attaches information on news stories and two letters. The Star-Phoenix publishes a letter to the editor on EPS 100.

22. 22 February 1989: Swift Current Sun runs letter to the editor on EPS 100. CHRC Principal receives telephone message that the Dean of Education is unavailable for a meeting on the dates proposed.

23. 24 February 1989: Office of the Registrar, University of Regina, provides a print-out of current education students. It shows that overall, the proportion of female students is almost exactly two-thirds (66.5%). Among those selected by the Faculty to come into EPS 100, the proportion of women is reduced to just over one-half (52%). This information is forwarded to CHRC.

24. 27 February 1989: CHRC Principal writes to the Dean, suggesting that even though there will be some posturing on both sides, a face-to-face meeting might lead to a mutually beneficial exchange of information.

25. 3 March 1989: Dean of Education, having been unsuccessful in telephoning CHRC Principal, writes a letter (copy to CHRC Board Chairperson) making far-ranging accusations suggesting (without using the word) unprofessional conduct. He reports having made a background investigation of the Principal: "On checking elsewhere, [I] find I'm not alone in experiencing this pattern [of behaviour]... We will want to work directly with your Board."

26. 6 March 1989: CHRC Principal returns the Dean's telephone call of 3 March. Dean informs him that he finds the Principal's conduct outrageously unprofessional, that he has investigated the Principal's background, and that henceforth, he would deal only with the CHRC Board.

27. 10 March 1989: CHRC Principal retains legal counsel to protect his interests.

28. 23 March 1989: A meeting in Swift Current is finally

arranged between representatives of Regina's Faculty of Education, including its Dean and other officials, and representatives of Cypress Hills Regional College, including two Board members, its Principal, and other officials.

29. 17 April 1989: A College committee is struck to prepare a proposal to the University of Regina regarding off-campus teacher education.

30. 28 February to 2 March 1990: CHRC Principal presents a paper at a Decentralized Teacher Education Conference in Fort St. John, B.C. Regina's Dean of Education, invited to share this platform, declines with regret.

* * *

According to information supplied by the Registrar, a total of 534 first-year students were admitted to the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina in the Fall of 1988. Of these, 359 were full-time and 175 were part-time.

According to information supplied by the Faculty of Education, provision was made for 330 spaces in EPS 100. It was further provided that only 210 of the students successful in gaining admission to EPS 100 would be permitted to proceed.

Simple arithmetic shows that this one course plays a role in screening out over sixty percent of the students who entered under what is ostensibly an open admissions policy. It is therefore impossible to avoid the conclusion that EPS 100 does for Regina's Faculty of Education what admissions quotas and rising entrance requirements do for the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan.

It is not the purpose of this paper to argue in favour of enough funding for Saskatchewan universities to eliminate all limitations on university entrance, be they in education or in other disciplines. Rather, the argument is that if funding constraints force such limitations, care must be taken not to injure the interests of those students enrolled in a decentralized program. Yet the use of EPS 100 as a screening device does exactly that. Once the decision was made to use the course for this purpose, it became a given that it could not be permitted to go off-campus. Tenured or tenure-track on-campus professors simply cannot delegate the difficult task of selecting the forty percent who proceed to sessional lecturers who may be of doubtful worth and who in any case are far, far away.

A direct consequence of this arrangement is that it is not

possible for a student in Regina's Faculty of Education to take a complete first year off-campus. Needless to say, this represents a severe barrier for rural and northern students. An indirect consequence is discrimination against women. There is considerable evidence that the percentage of women in the decentralized, off-campus program is higher than it is on-campus. Further, experience and statistics suggest that rural women tend to be less mobile than their male colleagues; if required courses are only available to those who can make the pilgrimage to the urban campus, women are fated to suffer preferentially.

Also needless to say, there is not the slightest hint that EPS 100 is used as a screening device with a deliberate aim of reducing the numbers of rural or female students. All the evidence suggests that EPS 100 was seen as a way to solve a difficult problem, and that those who are responsible for the present system were motivated by a genuine concern that there be effective quality control over the critical and sensitive process of selecting the relatively few students permitted to proceed in their B.Ed. program.

That having been said, it must be added that fairness calls for equal opportunities on- and off-campus where possible.

Shooting ourselves in the foot: conflicting visions of off-campus post-secondary education. Post-secondary education in Saskatchewan is undergoing a significant transition. Prior to 1988, the province had fifteen small community colleges, an Indian community college with a province-wide mandate, and four technical institutes.

The community colleges were billed as "colleges without walls" - flexible institutions with no costly permanent facilities, few permanent employees, a program mix that responded to the demands of the day, and a heavy emphasis on hobby, leisure and recreation courses.

In 1987-88, the provincial government amalgamated the four technical institutes, reduced the number of colleges from fifteen to nine, and introduced a new Regional Colleges Act which took colleges out of the hobby, leisure and recreation business. Colleges gained the right to own property; they were encouraged to broker both university and technical-vocational courses; they continued to deliver programs of academic upgrading.

In the past two years, the colleges have risen to the challenge. My own institution became the first in Saskatchewan

to buy itself an old high school as a permanent campus in Swift Current; we increased our university enrolments - mostly in Swift Current - to the point where we have been averaging three hundred registrations annually. Outside of the City of Swift Current, we established branch offices in Maple Creek, Shaunavon and Gravelbourg. Our 1988-89 Annual Report shows that during the year, the number of classes offered in Maple Creek increased by almost 20% (from 34 to 40), while the number of participants almost quadrupled (from 118 to 438). In Shaunavon, the number of classes more than doubled (from 12 to 28), and the number of participants increased almost as much (from 132 to 249). Finally, in Gravelbourg both the number of classes and the number of participants more than tripled (from 11 to 36 classes and from 100 to 360 participants).

It is the belief of my Board and myself that under their new Act and mandate, Saskatchewan colleges have an opportunity to grow into credible deliverers of post-secondary credit programs to rural Saskatchewan. Among the more important programs is teacher education, for which there is a strong local demand. But perhaps we are blinded, for not everyone shares our view of the potential of Saskatchewan regional colleges in this area.

There exists a movement in Saskatchewan's smaller cities and towns to create a network of junior colleges. The definition of 'junior college' will differ depending on whom one talks to. In general they are envisioned to be certificate- and diploma-granting colleges with a permanent campus, a resident faculty, and university-transfer programs in addition to the technical-vocational ones.

The junior college movement has followers in the City of Swift Current. A draft proposal for a local junior college has argued that there is an urgent need to increase rural access to post-secondary programs by decentralizing their delivery. Such a junior college is viewed as one way to remove the impact of enrolment quotas.

Cypress Hills Regional College has consistently taken the position that it welcomes any enhancement of the post-secondary programs delivered in rural Saskatchewan. However, it has also taken the view that any proposed enhancements should generally be within the framework of the existing system (which, it will be remembered, is fairly new, having emerged from a 1987-88 restructuring).

Specifically, the City's draft proposal is unsatisfactory to

CHRC on two counts - governance and program offerings. The proposal envisions a new system of governance, with a Board appointed at least in part by the City of Swift Current and neighboring communities. (At present, Regional College Boards are appointed solely by the provincial government.) Second, it proposes that the junior college offer university transfer and selected technical-vocational programs: for instance accounting, business administration, selected farming and farm management courses, computer training, and selected health and social services programs. "Such programs as General Education, Office Education and Secretarial Service, Pre-Employment Trades Training, Adult Basic Education, Literacy and Upgrading, Career Counselling [and] Personal Development Programs would remain the responsibility of the Regional College", the draft report proposes.

Consultants for the City and elected officials are convinced that if the City and the Regional College presented a joint proposal, the provincial cabinet would find it irresistable. If I shared that belief, then I would recommend to my Board that the College formally associate itself with such an initiative. But I find it inconceivable that after recently having created the system of Regional Colleges - and taking some political criticism in the process - the government

would now sanction the establishment of yet another college system - one which it would be expected to fund, but over whose governance it would have but limited influence. (I am also disturbed by the elitism that is implicit in the division of program reponsibilities between the proposed junior college and the existing Regional College.)

For these reasons, I consider the City's proposal doomed to failure, and believe that it would not be politic for the Regional College to associate itself with it in any way. The City, however, believes that the Cabinet is receptive to proposals along its own lines, and urges us to make common cause. And indeed, if the City's proposal is irresistable, then we no doubt should.

The upshot of all this is that at present we have two groups in our community, both of which support the decentralization of post-secondary credit programs to rural Saskatchewan, but who are badly in disagreement on the details and so cannot support each other.

Disunity among supporters of decentralized post-secondary programs is a very real and serious obstacle. Ironically, it is one which we have erected ourselves.

Our ignorance of training outcomes: are we limiting the intellectual horizons of the teaching profession? Off-campus teacher education is not a new idea. From 1982 to 1986, I was Superintendent of Education in a small system of three schools, thirty to thirty-five professional staff, and about seven hundred students. Three or four of our teachers - about ten percent of the total - had received their certification through an off-campus program.

Having observed these graduates professionally at first hand does not enable me to come to any conclusions about the quality of their training; the numbers were too small. I am, of course, aware of the criticisms that were directed against the program - it never exposed the students to the multitude experiences that confront the on-campus students. Not only did these students have to make do with inferior library facilities; they came into contact with fewer instructors, they never met other students from across the province and and across the country, and living in a small community, they missed out on the civilizing influences of the city.

Yet the program also had its defenders. These students, I was told, remained true to their own cultural heritage, which those who went away to take their teacher training so

often lost. I was as little able to verify this claim about the program as any of the others. Although I headed the system, I remained an outsider - a white expert hired to administer a school system on an Indian reserve.

To the members of the Band, the attraction of a decentralized teacher education did not lie in lower cost, or greater ease of access, or the promise of economic benefits. It lay in the hope that these teachers would remain true Indians, not Apples.

There is are two points here to be considered further, and I shall do no more than to raise them. First: Are there really any measurable differences that can be related to whether a teacher was educated on-campus or off-campus? Both the proponents and the critics of the Northern Teacher Education Program claimed that there were; I have insufficient data to form an independent opinion. Second: If there are such differences, is the decentralized program better or worse? My own experience on the reserve suggests that answers given to this question are heavily influenced by values and beliefs.

Certainly the first question is in principle capable of being answered with reasonable objectivity. I will admit to

my own ignorance of what that answer is; I simply do not know whether decentralized programs produce a different sort of teacher than on-campus programs.

Until we can make a reasonable case that on the whole, decentralized programs are equal to on-campus programs, the suspicion will remain that they limit the intellectual horizons of their graduates. A redneck might say that the programs are good enough for Indians, but one would not want one's own kid getting her teacher training in one of them.

A few modest conclusions.

1. Increased accessibility costs money, and increasing the accessibility of teacher education programs for rural and northern residents is no exception.

2. When less money is available for education, it is possible that decentralized teacher education programs become an early target of cost-cutting efforts.

3. Some issues related to decentralized teacher education are emotionally charged: e.g. rural access to education or meeting the special needs of women or Indians. It is not

unusual that attempts to resolve them will be heavily laced with posturing and hypocrisy (by all concerned).

4. Even proponents of decentralized teacher education programs have their differences with each other. When the differences erupt into open conflict, the common cause suffers.

5. There is very little reliable knowledge about the quality of decentralized teacher education programs. More evaluation and research needs to be done to make the arguments in their favour compelling.

* * *

ERIC Clearinghouse for
Junior Colleges
APR 26 1990